

telegraphs in the progressive business community, news among the white elites traveled quickly from one location to the next, helping to organize troops and civilian support, and to seek medical assistance.³⁶ Racing across the city to find family members, black men and women spread rumors of murder and fire well before the full-scale conflict.

Because of the frantic nature of the story and the way in which it was reported at the time of the event—often with papers going to press while guns were fired in the streets—many inaccurate or incomplete accounts were circulated and survive today. Letters and other primary documents survive from witnesses and participants to add their personal experiences to printed versions of the day's activities. Some who participated in the riot and later recalled the day in order to record the "rebellion" for posterity added through their memories many of the reporting inaccuracies. Confusion has arisen over the accuracy and truthfulness of participant records, contemporary newspaper articles, and similar data. Therefore, one must piece the day's events together using multiple, often overlapping, information sources.

To comprehend the ensuing riot, it must be understood that groups of four to eight armed white men were patrolling every block throughout the city from the day's

first light until nightfall and had been doing similar patrols throughout the weeks leading up to the election.³⁷ Because tensions were high after the mass meeting on the ninth, the men and their patrols were even more on edge than previously. Exhaustion and fear were prevalent emotions.³⁸ Still, many black and white workers proceeded to work as if nothing had changed. In addition to the patrols, the WLI and Naval Reserves were well prepared—having at the ready several horse drawn wagons mounted with machine guns and cannons, or designed for troop transport.

Hell Broke Loose

Harry Hayden wrote that "Hell broke loose" about an hour after the *Record* was destroyed. The majority of the violence and bloodshed that took place was found in Brooklyn, the traditionally African American neighborhood in the northern section of the city.³⁹ The first shots between whites and blacks were fired at Fourth and Harnett as armed white men returned to their neighborhood from the march that burned

³⁶ Wilmington and Raleigh were the first two cities in North Carolina to establish telephone exchanges in North Carolina in 1879. Access to telephones was limited to businesses and leading businessmen. The 1897 city directory provides the numbers for fifty-three patrons of the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company and for twenty-seven customers of the Interstate Telephone and Telegraph Company. Patrons included many men central to the story of the riot: Hardy Fennell, the Orton hotel, Charles Schnibben, Iredell Meares, Roger Moore, Robert Orrell, Walker Taylor, and James Woolvin. Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 162; 1897 Wilmington City Directory; Jane Cronly letter, nd, Cronly Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

³⁷ EY Wootten to "Edward," November 8, 1898, Wootten Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library.

³⁸ Many of the letters and accounts used in this report contain references to exhaustion on the part of the participants because they were consistently awakened for patrol duty and to assemble for threats of armed blacks that never materialized. Collections containing such letters include, Cronly Papers, James Spencer Worth Papers, Wootten Papers, Hinsdale Papers, Eccles Family Papers, and the Louis T. Moore Collection.

³⁹ Brooklyn has historically been considered the African American section of the city. Documents relating to the violence of November 10 indicate that Brooklyn "began" at the Fourth Street Bridge. Research using the city directory and maps generated by Hayumi Higuchi indicate that the area around Fourth and Harnett was a mixed-race neighborhood with a nearly 50/50 mix of whites and blacks.